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Briton's wife claims cash was smuggled to Tafoya

FORT COLLINS — Money that authorities claim Eugene Tafoya received after shooting a Libyan dissident here was smuggled to him from Libya by a British businessman, the businessman's wife said Tuesday.

Joan Stone, wife of London businessman R.C. Stone, said her husband smuggled about \$8,000 out of Libya as a favor for Tafoya. She said the money initially was put into the Stones' personal bank account, then was transferred to Tafoya's account. The transaction occurred about three months after the shooting of Faisal Zagallai.

Mrs. Stone said in a telephone interview from London that her husband befriended Tafoya and Tafoya's wife, Betty, while the three were staying in a Libyan hotel. She said her husband decided to smuggle the money out of the northern African nation after Betty Tafoya said she feared Libyan customs agents would search and confiscate it. Betty Tafoya allegedly had been strip-searched by customs agents in Libya.

If the transaction occurred, smuggling of money out of Libya raises a key question: If Tafoya shot Zagallai for the Libyan government, as the prosecution claims, why would he fear that the money would be confiscated by his employer?

Tafoya told two stories about his receipt of the \$8,000 payment. One said that the payment was for delivering a message to Zagallai to tone down anti-Zionist radio broadcasts. On the witness stand last week, Tafoya said the payment was from former CIA agent Edwin P. Wilson for work Tafoya had done in Libya.

Stone's name surfaced only briefly at Tafoya's trial on charges of attempted first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder. Prosecutors cross-examining Tafoya noted that

Stone's name appeared in Tafoya's address book. They asked defendant about it, and Tafoya said Stone was a friend he met in Libya.

Mrs. Stone said her husband, who she said is critically ill in a hospital, never knew the source of Tafoya's \$8,000.

"Tafoya told my husband to take \$1,000 for himself for the effort," Mrs. Stone said.

Stone took only \$100 for his efforts, Mrs. Stone said.

Prosecutors claim that Wilson — a former CIA operative and indicted gunrunner — arranged the Zagallai shooting to as part of a campaign by Libyan strongman Col. Moammar Khadafy to silence opposition abroad.

Tafoya has admitted working for Wilson, but said it was only a cover for his real employment with the CIA.

"It had nothing to do with Wilson," Mrs. Stone said of her husband's handling of Tafoya's money. "He (her husband) was simply doing a favor for the Tafoyas."

A source close to the case said Stone may have been closer to Wilson than his wife claimed. Stone allegedly had business dealings with Wilson while selling radio equipment to Libya.

Passport records show Tafoya traveled to England three days after the Zagallai shooting. Authorities believe he stayed there for several days in a bungalow owned by Wilson. The passports also show that on Nov. 10, 1980, Tafoya arrived in Libya, where he remained until Jan. 31.

On Jan. 28 — three days before he left Libya — a deposit of \$8,623 was sent to Tafoya's bank account in Truth or Consequences, N.M., according to court documents.

Authorities suspect that deposit was remuneration for the Zagallai shooting.